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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., an organization committed to empowerment of women locally, nationally and globally, welcomes consideration of the theme Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at its 52nd session.

Economic development is one of the five major programmatic thrusts of the Sorority's programme, along with Educational Development, International Awareness and Involvement, Physical and Mental Health, and Political Awareness and Involvement.

The Sorority notes that, although a number of international conferences and declarations have recognized gender equality and women's empowerment as key to achieving sustainable development, practical initiatives for effective implementation frequently have been lacking.

As noted by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, "commitments have been made on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women by Governments at the international level, including through the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), the Millennium Summit (2000), the Monterrey Consensus (2002); and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005). However, limited progress has been made in channeling and allocating resources to translate these commitments into action."

While a number of Governments have taken initiatives to integrate gender perspectives into their national budgets aimed at reflecting the needs of women as well as men, there have been, as yet, insufficient resources devoted to adequately supporting policies and programmes that promote the advancement of women.

Furthermore, women in all parts of the world have been largely under-represented among the primary decision makers in financial markets and institutions. As a result, the issues of greatest concern to women are often marginalized in policy processes and decision-making at both the government and private sector levels.

We draw attention to the fact that, in addition to public finance and donor funding, funds and foundations have been established to raise resources for activities designed to promote gender equality. These include women's development funds that have been set up in many countries to fund local, national and regional organizations working on these goals.

Delta recognizes that financing for gender equality and empowerment of women is both a critical and complex undertaking, the characteristics of which vary from country to country and region to region. Yet, it is one that needs to be urgently addressed on all fronts and at all levels.

Women, especially those in the poorest and most marginalized sectors, live in disadvantaged conditions that limit the free exercise of their rights and their capacity for development. Swift action is needed to address their needs.

While we understand that micro-credit alone cannot eliminate the barriers women face in accessing markets and financial resources, we nonetheless recognize it as a vehicle to empower women and their families by making available low-cost loans to small, women-run businesses. Delta is cooperating with institutions working in this field. The Sorority recently provided funds to Opportunity International to assist them in awarding micro-loans to women in Ghana.

The impact of economic inequality is exacerbated when women lack access to basic services. It is in this context that the Sorority is also working to provide clean water to selected local schools in Kenya and, through the National Council of Women, funding the construction of wells in some local communities in Ghana.

We look forward to the discussions at CSW52, especially inasmuch as it is the first time that the Commission has specifically addressed the issue of financing for gender equality and empowerment of women. The deliberations provide a unique opportunity to broaden the dialogue on this most important topic and an opportunity to forward the policy recommendations required to accelerate implementation of existing commitments, including those in the Beijing Platform for Action.

Equally, we look forward to advancing the debate during the CSW52 review of the agreed conclusions on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building. We specifically encourage the examination of ways to increase the role of women in negotiations, peace talks and post-war reconstruction and planning, as well as follow up to the other recommendations contained in the resolution.